

VZCZCXYZ0000  
OO RUEHWEB

DE RUEHMO #0181/01 0251247  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
O 251247Z JAN 08  
FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6269  
INFO RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RUEHXD/MOSCOW POLITICAL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 000181

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/25/2018  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [KDEM](#) [PHUM](#) [SOCI](#) [KISL](#) [RS](#)  
SUBJECT: FRAGILE STABILITY IN CHECHNYA

REF: 07 MOSCOW 5345

Classified By: Ambassador William J. Burns. Reasons: 1.4 (B) & (D)

¶1. (C) Summary: At the end of 2007, a mixed picture emerged in Chechnya with relative stability in the form of fewer abductions and terrorist acts offset by near absolute control by President Ramzan Kadyrov. Kadyrov has achieved a greater deal of autonomy for Chechnya from Moscow than one might have thought possible at the beginning of Putin's term as president and is now consolidating his control over Chechen society. While Kadyrov is personally tied to Putin, we believe the compact with the Kremlin will remain intact after the March 2 presidential elections. End summary.

#### Chechnya Trades Freedom for Stability

¶2. (SBU) In addition to the dramatic economic turnaround, most northern Caucasus experts agree (some, perhaps reluctantly) that the security situation in Chechnya has improved significantly since Putin appointed then Prime Minister Ramzan Kadyrov as Chechnya's President last spring. According to Chechen Minister of Internal Affairs Ruslan Alkhanov, last year Chechen police killed 72 insurgents and detained 325, while losing 82 of its own personnel. Alkhanov also claimed that actions by the police led to a 72 percent decrease in terrorist acts in 2007, including a 45.6 percent decrease in the number of pre-meditated murders, a 45.6 percent decrease in larceny and a 25 percent decrease in robbery. (Note: Alkhanov's statistics on the reduction of terrorist activities may have benefited from a new definition of terrorism adopted by the Russian Duma in July 2006, which makes it more difficult to categorize an act as terrorist.) The day before the release of the 2007 statistics, Chechen officials delivered another setback to the insurgents when heavily armed police attacked a home in Grozny killing four suspected terrorists, including Uvais Tachiyev, the 25-year old leader of a suspected insurgent group on Russia's "most wanted" list. In addition, Chechen Interior Ministry police killed four other insurgents on December 16. According to law enforcement sources, in the entire northern Caucasus region police arrested 457 insurgents and convicted 167 in ¶2007.

¶3. (C) According to human rights advocates, a marked reduction in the number of kidnappings is another measure of increased stability in Chechnya. In its January 16 assessment of conditions in Chechnya, the human rights organization Memorial reported that the trend to greatly reduced numbers of kidnappings that started in the first three months of 2007 (in which the organization had evidence of only 16 abductions as compared to 53 during the same period in 2006) continued through September 2007. Memorial reported only 25 abductions for the first nine months of 2007 (vice 187 for the comparable period in 2006). Memorial surmised that this dramatic improvement may be due to strict

orders from Kadyrov to the heads of security agencies to put a stop to abductions. Tanya Lokshina, head of the Demos Center, told us in October 2007 that the reduction in reported cases may also mean that family members are too frightened of retaliation to report their missing relatives (Reftel). However, Carnegie Center's Aleksey Malashenko underscored that citizens turn to Kadyrov for relief, not human rights organizations, because Kadyrov is the arbiter.

#### Kadyrov Deepens Control Over Society

-----

¶4. (SBU) Chechnya's stability comes at a social price, according to Moscow-based human rights organizations. Memorial Chairman Oleg Orlov told us that while there were noticeable improvements, he saw signs of the development of a "totalitarian system," with a burgeoning cult of personality. Svetlana Gannushkina, the head of the NGO Civil Assistance and a member of Putin's Council for the Development of Civil Society and Human Rights Organizations headed by Ella Pamfilova, contends that respect for Chechen citizens' rights has worsened under Kadyrov.

¶5. (SBU) Notwithstanding Kadyrov's January call for citizens to refrain from excessive demonstrations of loyalty, the Chechen president clearly has set out to make his mark on Chechen society, including by taking on the role of a populist national leader. He is referred to there by first name alone, and has recently chided local television stations for broadcasting programs that he believes offend Chechnya's ethnic traditions. In November 2007 Kadyrov complained about low-cut wedding dresses on sale at bridal salons in Chechnya. He has also suggested -- with little or no response from Moscow -- that women should cover their heads in public, especially those young women who attend high school or university. Kadyrov has issued decrees imposing prohibitions on gambling and alcohol. Many experts doubt Kadyrov's religious conversion, believing instead that he is promoting the folk Sufi/Naqshbandi brand of Sunni Islam predominate in Chechnya over the Salafi brand of Sunni Islam espoused by the North Caucasus insurgents.

#### Kadyrov Keeps GOR at Arm's Length

-----

¶6. (SBU) Experts continue to marvel at Kadyrov's skill in trading loyalty to Putin for greater freedom from the oversight of federal authorities. Carnegie's Malashenko notes that Kadyrov quickly disabused the Kremlin of the need to look after the Chechen "orphans" with Malashenko crediting Kadyrov with "all the initiative" in ruling Chechnya. Not only is Kadyrov's government working, Malashenko argues its potential has yet to be exhausted. Kadyrov has long championed the expulsion of Russian Interior Ministry Operations and Investigations Bureau (ORB-2) troops from Chechnya and blames them for the most severe human rights abuses of the past eight years. Nezavisimaya Gazeta reported on January 22 that Kadyrov's most recent gambit is to restrict federal Ministry of Defense use of Chechen territory as a firing range. A Chechen arbitration court is scheduled to take up the case on January 29. The next shoe to drop will be his publicly espoused plan to take back operations of Chechnya's existing oil production facilities and pipelines, modeled after the successful Tatneft in Tatarstan. Kadyrov's long-term independence has been bolstered by a recent change to the Chechen constitution that gives him the right serve as president in perpetuity.

#### Comment:

-----

¶7. (C) Russia's attempt to devolve responsibility for security to Kadyrov has perhaps worked too well; Kadyrov is increasingly calling the shots inside Chechnya on an ever wider range of social issues. Although Kadyrov does not have the same type of relationship with presidential heir apparent Dmitriy Medvedev, with Putin expected to remain as prime minister the compact with the Kremlin will likely remain

intact into Medvedev's presidency.  
BURNS